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THE ALLEGED
VANDALISM AT
STRATFORD-ON-AVON

By
SIDNEY LEE

(The former of Birmingham's Mayor)

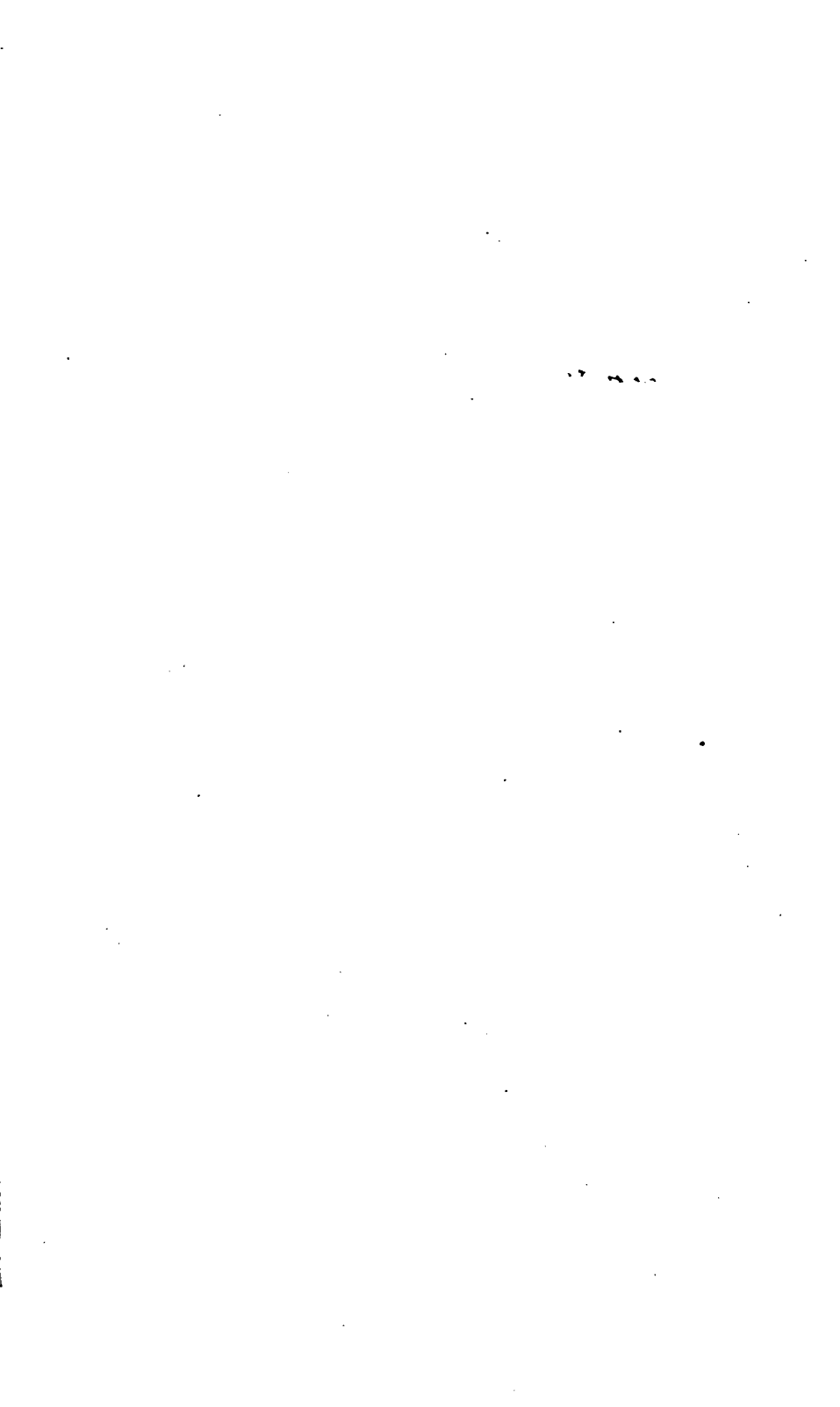
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"The world with nothing at my name, but
back doors set on fire."

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With the writer's friend's notes.

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20 July 1903

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM AT
STRATFORD-ON-AVON





HENLEY STREET, LOOKING WEST

Shot, especially, by the author, in the middle distance to the right.

THE
ALLEGED VANDALISM AT
STRATFORD-ON-AVON

By
SIDNEY LEE
Life Trustee of Shakespear's Birthplace

WITH TWELVE ILLUSTRATIONS

“The earth hath bubbles, as the water has
And these are of them”

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IN AMERICA

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Preface

THIS statement, a small part of which has already appeared in the newspapers, treats of the action that has been officially taken by the Trustees of Shakespeare's birthplace and by the Corporation of Stratford-on-Avon in regard to the disposition of certain buildings in Henley Street, which have been the subject of a long public controversy. It is common knowledge that that controversy was initiated in February by Miss Marie Corelli, who has resided in Stratford for the past three years, and that it has been maintained by her and her friends with spirited persistence up to the present time. It is with regret that I find myself in conflict with Miss Corelli. However mistaken I may deem most of her action in the present matter, I have no reason to disbelieve in her devotion to Stratford and to Shakespeare's memory.

Two separate, but adjacent, portions of Henley Street are in question; one portion was lately assigned to the control of the Birthplace Trustees,

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the other portion has for centuries been the exclusive property of the Corporation. Each body exercises perfectly distinct functions and acts independently of the other. But their recent action has this much in common. Each body, with a view to the public advantage, has resolved, on grounds which are sufficiently indicated in the following pages, to devote certain property at its disposal to one or other of two branches of the public service. It should be understood, however, that these two branches—respectively, the better protection of Shakespeare's Birthplace from fire and the provision of the town of Stratford with a free public library—are separate and distinct.

At the beginning of this year both the Birthplace Trustees and the Corporation had it in contemplation to demolish some houses in Henley Street, and to devote their sites to public uses. To this course of action Miss Corelli published objections. At the outset no exception could be taken to her strictures, apart from the circumstance that they misapprehended the general wish of the inhabitants of Stratford, and confused together the two objects and the two authorities which were involved in the discussion. Doubt seems to me justifiable as to whether any genuine literary, historical or archæological interests were imperilled by the procedure contemplated by either of the two Stratford authorities concerned. But both Trustees and Corporation postponed final

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action, in order to give critics of their proposals every opportunity of examining the position of affairs. A prolonged series of protests against the proposals of the two bodies followed Miss Corelli's first interposition. Into many of these a heat was imported which appeared to be out of keeping with the issues at stake, and all misconceived in much the same way the crucial features of the situation, and the respective responsibilities of Trustees and Corporation.

But it is not the early criticism of the Stratford authorities that calls at this distance of time for detailed notice. On quite another footing stand the more recent denunciations. These denunciations are subsequent to the time when the authorities had arrived at and had announced the wise and considerate policy which was to govern their final action. The authorities publicly adopted all such views of their advisers as rested on sound and accurate information. Yet that circumstance was ignored, and the campaign was continued with greater bitterness and more obvious inaccuracy than in its early stages.

On May 12, at a meeting of the Council of the Corporation—(the proceedings were fully reported)—it was clearly shown that scrupulous care was being taken to respect reasonable literary, historic, and archæological sentiment.

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The grave misapprehensions which had infected nearly the whole of the irresponsible censures that had appeared in the press, were at this meeting authoritatively exposed. Nevertheless, the original misstatements and misrepresentations were not suffered by their authors to perish. They were quickly repeated with increased vehemence. On May 17, five days after the Council's unanswerable refutation, Miss Corelli, in a speech addressed to a meeting of the O.P. Club in London, sought to give to the old misconceptions a new lease of life. An article in the June number of the *New Liberal Review*, entitled "The Beatitudes of Mr. Carnegie," pursued the like path. Such procedure has naturally engendered in that large section of the public which is without opportunity of independent investigation the utmost confusion of thought. That confusion can only be dissipated if the full history of the controversy be brought to public notice.

With what recklessness the war has been waged by irresponsible critics during the past few weeks may be inferred from the fact that on May 25 a writ was served upon the Birthplace Trustees. They were vaguely charged with various offences against the Act of Parliament by which they were incorporated in 1891. The Attorney-General, "at and by the relation of Charles John Williams (Member of the Council of the British Archæological Association), and

PREFACE

Allen Sculthorpe Walker (Correspondent of the British Archæological Association),” issued against the Trustees as defendants a claim for—

“(1) an injunction to restrain the Defendants from a continuance or repetition of the demolition of buildings under their authority and control and from erecting or permitting the erection of buildings contrary to the provisions of the Shakespeare’s Birthplace Trust Act 1891.

“(2) Execution of the trusts under the aforesaid Statute.

“(3) Further and other relief.”

Of the two “relators” or “informers” I only know Mr. Walker as the author of letters in the newspapers which adversely criticized the action of the Stratford authorities. I do not remember to have heard of Mr. Williams before. The hearing was appointed for Mr. Justice Buckley’s Court. These gentlemen’s allegations, so far as they were specified, were obviously misconceived. But it is impossible to examine them closely, because no statement of claim was ever filed. On June 26, thirty-two days after the writ was served, the “relators’” solicitors sent to the Trustees’ solicitors a notice of discontinuance of the action, at the same time forwarding a cheque for costs. The amount was deemed by the Trustees’ solicitors inadequate; and the costs are to be taxed in the usual way.

PREFACE

It is difficult to explain the procedure of the "relators," but it is sufficient for my present purpose to put the episode on record. Numerous illustrations of the more habitual controversial methods of the opponents of the Corporation and the Trustees figure in the notes to my statement; in an appendix I have printed specimens of the aspersions that have been cast upon the Birthplace Trustees, a list of whose names I supply.

I have also added the report of the Library Committee of the Corporation which was adopted by the Town Council on May 12, and the report on the Library site prepared by Mr. Thackeray Turner on behalf of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, dated June 2, 1903.

My remarks on the restoration which Shakespeare's Birthplace and the adjoining building underwent after they became the property of the public in 1847, embody facts which are familiar to all acquainted with the history of Stratford. The murky cloud of misunderstanding, which in the popular imagination envelopes Henley Street, renders it desirable that the street's whole story should be precisely told. The slipshod handling of local history which characterizes most of the voluminous attacks on the local authorities seems calculated, unless it be squarely faced, to debase the intellectual currency of all interested in Stratford. The truth about

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Shakespeare's Birthplace does not prejudice the value of its associations. Many may learn with regret that the dormer windows and the porch were removed from the house in 1800 after they had so long resisted time's ravages, and that a brick front was erected in place of the ancient timber façade of the adjoining building in 1840. But all may find comfort in the positive knowledge that the interior has been wonderfully well preserved, and that the renovation was probably the most successful work of the kind ever accomplished. Care was taken to protect all that it was safe to leave standing, and to follow up accurately in the detail of restoration every surviving relic of the original structure.

Although I believe that much weight attaches to the facts that I set forth, it is on the illustrations that I mainly rely for a full and lasting vindication of the action of the Trustees and the Corporation.

The four views of the Birthplace in various stages of its history possess, I think, general interest. The earliest known representation of the house, which dates from 1788, and is reproduced at page 27, has the highest value. It seems to have been drawn by Rupert Green, son of Valentine Green, the eminent engraver.¹

¹ Green's sketch was engraved on copper-plate by Colonel Philip De la Motte. The original copper-plate is preserved in

PREFACE

The eight views of Henley Street, with representations of all the buildings involved in the present controversy, as well as of a design for the new Library (after a sketch by Mr. Edgar Flower)¹, are extremely pertinent to the immediate issue.

Henley Street, as it is, is faithfully portrayed in the frontispiece to this volume. It is this street which we are warned by an enthusiastic supporter of Miss Corelli is about to be profaned for the first time by the "spirit of uncouth modernity." It is this street which according to another writer of like temper, has, until this agitation began, "been held sacred and protected from the hand of the restorer and votary of so-called modern improvements." It was "for the preservation" of this street "from any modern intrusion" that Miss Corelli herself, at a meeting of the Selborne Society, held in London as recently as May 5, 1903, "pleaded . . . *not only for ourselves but for all the unborn generations, that they might wend their way as we did, down the historic thoroughfare*

the Birthplace Museum at Stratford-on-Avon. An early impression is in the British Museum. Colonel Philip De la Motte, who was an archæologist of some repute, and an intimate friend of Captain Grose the antiquary, resided at Batsford, Gloucestershire, which lies about sixteen miles to the south of Stratford.

¹ This sketch in its main outlines agrees with the design prepared for the Library Committee by Mr. E. C. Holtom, architect of Stratford, in the autumn of 1902. Mr. Holtom's design was published as a supplement to the *Stratford-on-Avon Herald*, on August 15, 1902.

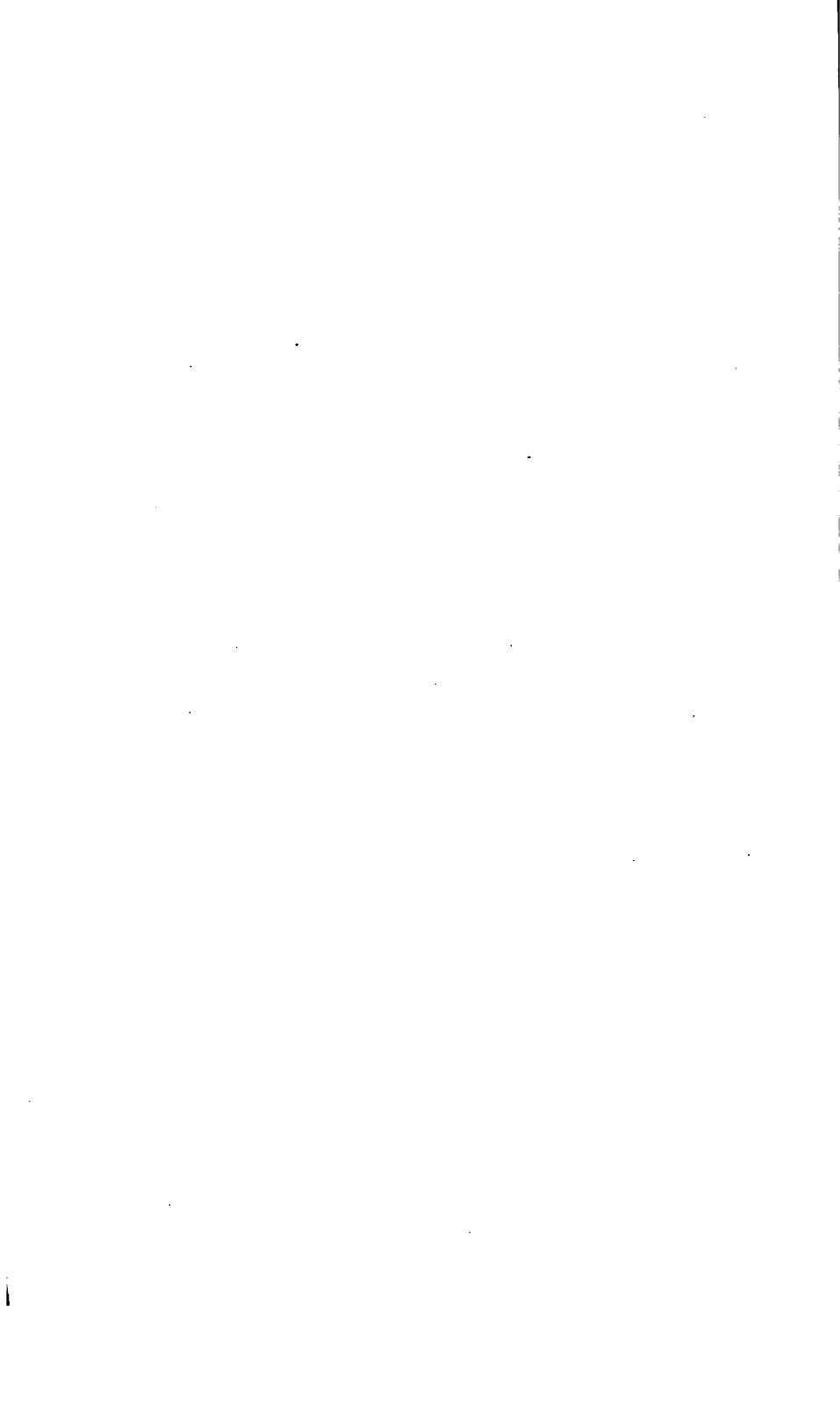
PREFACE

and find it spared from any touch of modernity."
It is charitable to assume that these writers are afflicted with no more serious disorder than defective vision. Descriptions, from fellow-pens, of Mr. Carnegie's cottages and of the Corporation china-shop, which are all frequently depicted in this volume, seem to bear witness to equally distorted eyesight. It is my hope that these pictorial illustrations may serve to restore to normal vigour all visual power that the heat of controversy has impaired.

S. L.

July 8.

* * The views of the Library site are reproduced here by permission of Mr. E. Anthony Tyler, of Stratford-on-Avon, who is owner of the copyright.



The Alleged Vandalism at Stratford-on-Avon

I

The Writer's Relations with Stratford-on-Avon

AT the beginning of this year I was elected a Trustee of Shakespeare's Birthplace, an honour which I highly appreciated. My interest in Stratford is of old standing. The first book that I published—now near two decades ago—dealt with the town's early history and associations. More recent Shakespearean researches have intensified my regard for the place and its literary traditions. It was in a spirit of loyalty to those traditions that I accepted the office of Trustee, and I hope to fulfil my responsibilities in the like temper.

Within a few days of my election as Trustee of the Birthplace, I had to leave England to fulfil a series of long-standing engagements in America, whence I am just returned. Rumours reached me in America that my fellow-Trustees proposed to remove or alter various buildings adjoining Shakespeare's Birthplace, and that public opinion

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

was, on literary and artistic grounds, strongly excited by this course of action.

As soon as I arrived home, I made careful inquiry into the origin of these rumours. I learned that for some months past the Trustees had been constant objects of denunciation by persons who, from various points of view, claimed interest in the affairs of Stratford.

After due investigation of the circumstances, I have now assured myself that the public has been misled on almost all the essential points. Spasmodic endeavours have been made to remove the misconceptions from the public mind. But they persist in many quarters. I believe it to be to the public advantage, and in the interests of truth, to set forth clearly the full facts of the case. The public may then be in a position to form a judgment on the subject which shall be final. But it should be understood that I take this step on my sole personal responsibility.

II

Charges Brought Against the Trustees

PUT briefly, the charges alleged against the Trustees were two. Firstly, it was stated that they were wantonly bent on destroying the historic aspect of Henley Street, in which Shakespeare's Birthplace stands, by arranging for the demolition of houses of historic interest, which had lately come into their possession, in the immediate neighbourhood of the Birthplace. Secondly, the Trustees were accused of conspiring with the Corporation of Stratford-on-Avon to apply to the purposes of a Free Public Library another building of ancient date, which was situated in the same street, in close proximity to the Birthplace. The Trustees' action was described as "iconoclastic" and "barbarous," as a "serious piece of vandalism" involving "desecration" and "spoliation" of historic edifices.

It was made a further ground of objection, that the contemplated changes owed their origin to the intervention of Mr. Andrew Carnegie. That gentleman had not only purchased the

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houses adjoining the Birthplace, for presentation to the Trustees, but had also undertaken the expense of providing Stratford with a Public Library. It would be an impertinence to dwell on this part of the theme. No right-minded person can fail to resent the introduction of Mr. Carnegie's name into the controversy in other than appreciative terms. Mr. Carnegie's action was taken in characteristically generous response to applications which reached him from the town. He attached no conditions to his gifts, which were manifestly designed to serve the interests of Stratford and its literary associations.

Two separate issues have been raised in the strife, and have not been kept adequately distinct. The Trustees of the Birthplace, as constituted by the Act of Parliament of 1891, form a body that is quite independent of the Corporation of Stratford. The Act gives the Corporation a large representation on the Board of Trustees, but each body has its own statutory functions. Yet the Trustees have been constantly denounced for action, wholly outside their province, which was taken by the Corporation independently of them.

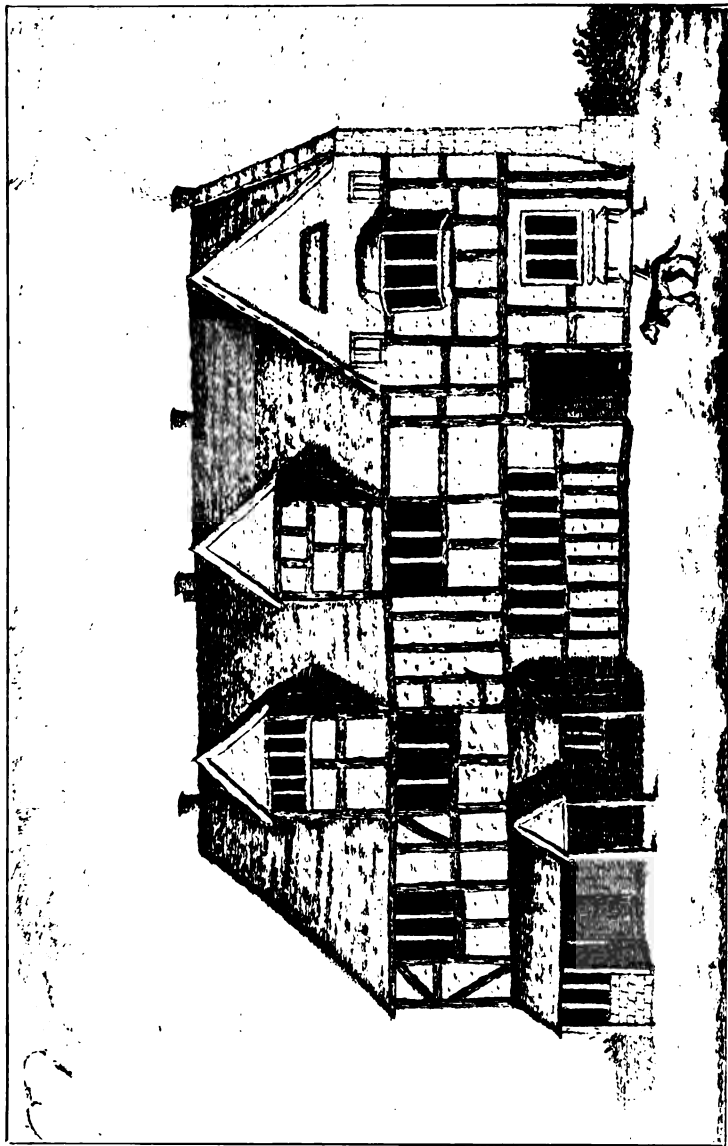
In regard to the present issues, the Trustees are solely concerned with the fate of the cottages in immediate proximity to the Birthplace garden, which were purchased by Mr. Carnegie for presentation to them. The second issue touches the



THE BUILDINGS IN HENLEY STREET INVOLVED IN THE DISCUSSION
[To the left the four cottages purchased by Mr. Carnegie to the right the Corporation china-shop destined for the public library]

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

fate of another building, which, although it adjoins this newly acquired property of the Trustees, belongs to the Corporation and has, in the exercise of that body's exclusive discretion, been appropriated by it to the projected Free Library. But I wish to cover the whole field of the discussion, and therefore am prepared to deal with the Corporation's action in regard to the Library, at the same time as I draw attention to the misunderstanding which lays such action at the Trustees' door.



SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHPLACE WITH ADJOINING BUILDING IN 1788

[The earliest known view. The adjacent buildings are not shown in the plate. After a copper-plate engraving by Colonel Philip Delamotte, of Batsford, Gloucestershire, of which the original copper-plate is preserved in the Birthplace Museum]

III

Henley Street and its History—The Renovated Birthplace

SOME knowledge of the past history and present condition of Henley Street, in which stand Shakespeare's Birthplace and all the buildings involved in the dispute, is essential to a just view of the situation. The Trustees are charged by Miss Corelli with neglecting to preserve "the present irregular beauty of historic Henley Street." As recently as last month she wrote that "if the proposed alterations are carried out, not a scrap of the original side of Henley Street as thousands of pilgrims have known and seen it will remain." One critic described the street as "a thing of peculiar value" which "once changed . . . will be lost for ever." "Let Shakespeare's Street alone!" cried another. "Leave the sacred side of Henley Street uncontaminated by modern bricks and mortar!"

These adjurations may be admirable in sentiment. But the remorseless hand of time robbed them of practical significance or of relevance to

HISTORY OF HENLEY STREET

the present issue, more than a hundred years ago.

What's gone and what's past help
Should be past grief.

Henley Street is undoubtedly one of the oldest in the town. Its records date from the Middle Ages. But no part of Stratford underwent more frequent and more complete renovation between the date of Shakespeare's death and the end of the last century. Few Elizabethan or Jacobean features are discernible in the earliest extant sketch of the street, the water-colour drawing (now hanging in the Birthplace Museum) which Mrs. Edward Fordham Flower executed in 1835. Such few Elizabethan or Jacobean features as are visible there have long since vanished. As the little Elizabethan or Jacobean houses of timber and rough-cast fell in the course of ages into decay, they were from time to time replaced by new structures, usually wholly of brick. More than sixty houses form the street. The owners (of all but two or three) were private persons in humble circumstances, who naturally carried out the needful renovations with a sole regard to economy, and with no consciousness of sentimental considerations.

As a result, the street, with the exception of one short strip, has long been lined by low, featureless brick-fronted tenements, ranging in date through all the decades of the nineteenth century.

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One large section, on the side of the street almost directly opposite to Shakespeare's Birthplace, is barely four years old. Its architecture is of obtrusively suburban type.

In some instances, when the buildings fell to ruin and reconstruction became inevitable, the interior timber supports were retained in order to save expense, and relics of ancient workmanship of no very romantic character were by economic accident and by no archæological design incorporated in the reconstructed edifices. But, even here, new flat brick fronts, fashioned entirely of modern material, invariably displaced the old timber façades with their overhanging storeys.

It is common knowledge that Shakespeare's Birthplace, with the adjoining house, which was also his father's property, is now distinguished among other things from the rest of Henley Street, by enjoying permanent legal protection from the casual vicissitudes of reparation to which its neighbours have always been and will, except in special conditions, always be liable. But Shakespeare's Birthplace has enjoyed its immunity from structural disturbance only since 1847. The structure had suffered experiences very like those of its neighbours before it was purchased for the public in that year. Some thirty years earlier half of it was furnished with a brand new brick front and the timber façade concealed and damaged. Happily the



SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHPLACE WITH ADJOINING BUILDING (USED AS THE SWAN AND MAIDENHEAD INN) IN 1806
[From R. B. Wheeler's *History of Stratford-on-Avon*, 1806]

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

timber-work of the interior was well preserved. But the present exterior of the Birthplace buildings is the outcome of a thorough-going, if scholarly, reconstruction, which conformed to a sketch made in 1788.

In order to isolate the renovated premises, houses on each side of it, despite the fact that they were in part of seventeenth century construction, each with an ascertainable history, were demolished at the date of the restoration. Their sites were designedly left vacant. However necessary such "spoliation" was, it deliberately added some fifty years ago one more—and a by no means unimportant—element of divergence between the aspect of the Birthplace and street in the sixteenth century and that which it bore in the nineteenth. Consequently "the irregular beauty of historic Henley Street" is, as far as the present condition of the street is concerned, the "very coinage of the brain."

The modest elevation of most of the modern, or comparatively modern, buildings of which the street now consists, is in harmony with the general proportions of the roadway and of the renovated Birthplace. It is desirable that, in any further rebuilding of the thoroughfare, the present elevation should be respected. But whatever happens now, Henley Street can never regain its pristine form or feature.



SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHPLACE WITH ADJOINING BUILDING (USED AS AN INN) IN 1840
[Showing the then recently erected brick front which has since been removed]

IV

The Cottages Purchased by Mr. Carnegie

ACCORDING to an editorial statement in the *Birmingham Gazette* of May 9, the true question at issue in this controversy is "whether our most precious national memorial [i.e., Shakespeare's Birthplace] shall suffer irreparable injury" at the hands of its legal guardians. It would be difficult to misrepresent the question more completely.

The present position of affairs, as far as the Birthplace Trustees are concerned, is due to a fire which in 1896 completely destroyed two shops in Henley Street, six doors off the little garden on the east side of the Birthplace. The accident brought home to the Trustees the desirability of isolating the Birthplace more effectually than before from neighbouring premises. To secure this object, it was necessary to acquire the cottages in Henley Street which abutted on the narrow gardens of the Birthplace. It was desirable either to demolish these and to extend the garden over their vacant sites, or to free them



SHAKESPEARE'S BIRTHPLACE WITH ADJOINING BUILDING AS IT IS
[After the restoration]

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

of danger of fire by withholding them from domestic or mercantile occupation. With the same object it was essential to remove, or at any rate withhold from further domestic occupation, a modern cottage with a modern-antique exterior in the Birthplace garden on the east side which was built for the custodian's residence at the time of the public purchase in 1847.¹ Other provision for housing the custodian was therefore needful.

Some doubt was justifiable as to whether the terms or financial position of the Trust allowed the Trustees to apply their funds to all these purposes. But last year Mr. Carnegie relieved the Trustees of their main difficulty on this score by purchasing, for presentation to them, a row of four cottages on the east side, where the risk of fire was chiefly imminent.²

The purchase of these cottages was only carried through at the expenditure of much time and money. Mr. Carnegie's intervention was indeed

¹ The modern-antique messuage or dwelling-house occupied by the custodian, with an adjoining stable forming part of the dwelling house, is enumerated among the Trustees' properties, which the Act of 1891 directs them to maintain "in fit and proper order." The Trustees consequently finally decided to withhold the custodian's house from domestic occupation rather than remove it.

² At the same time Mr. Carnegie reserved to the Corporation the right of appropriating to its own purposes a portion of the site of these four cottages, and he left the definition of the precise extent of the site, which was to be thus appropriated, to mutual arrangement between the Trustees and the Corporation.



THE FOUR COTTAGES PURCHASED BY MR. CARNEGIE

[With the Birthplace to the left and a portion of the Corporation's china-shop to the right]

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

peculiarly opportune on more grounds than were foreseen. The owner of the three cottages farthest from the Birthplace had been a refreshment caterer on a modest scale. It now proved that she intended to convert her three tenements into a single restaurant or tea-shop of an orthodox modern pattern. It was only on payment of a very large sum (£2,000) that she relinquished her resolve of establishing a restaurant on what (she argued) was, from its proximity to the Birthplace, with its annual army of visitors, the best site for such a purpose in the town. Thus by a happy coincidence Mr. Carnegie's purchase protected the Birthplace, not only from peril of fire but from peril of proximity to a most incongruous innovation.¹

No conspicuous historic nor archæological interest attached to any of the four houses. The two farthest removed from the Birthplace (on whose site once stood a single timbered and

¹ On November 17, 1902, Mr. Carnegie wrote to the late Sir Arthur Hodgson, K.C.M.G., then Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Trustees, stating how fortunate he would esteem himself if the Trustees would accept his purchase from him—"to be added and preserved as part of the Birthplace property." Mr. Carnegie continued: "Deeds satisfactory to you will be duly executed by me. I purchased the houses and ground expressly to make this gift." The Executive Committee of the Trustees at their meeting of December 3, 1902, unanimously passed a resolution of thanks to Mr. Carnegie "for his most generous offer." Deeds making the Trustees absolute and unconditional owners have since been executed.

MR. CARNEGIE'S COTTAGES

thatched cottage) were little better than hovels ; they had been crudely built of cheap modern brick within living memory, were innocent of all architectural features, and were at the back in ruinous condition. These two tenements have been recently demolished, and the site is to be converted into a garden.

The other two cottages, nearest the Birthplace, boast a more reputable record. In Shakespeare's day they formed one domicile which was occupied by a blacksmith called Richard Hornebye. The premises were early divided into two dwellings. In 1620 one of these was bought by Thomas Nash, who six years later married Shakespeare's granddaughter, Elizabeth Hall. But the Shakespearean connexions of the premises are of the slenderest. Shakespeare's granddaughter is not known to have been associated with the house. Her husband never occupied it, and at his death it passed to a cousin, Edward Nash, whose descendants owned it till 1709. Shakespeare's granddaughter survived her husband, and succeeded to some of his property, but this Henley Street tenement was at no time in her possession.¹

After its subdivision into two tenements, the building does not seem to have undergone further radical change until 1760. Thenceforth renovation was frequent. About 1810 the old timber

¹ Cf. Nash's will in Halliwell's *New Place* (1864), pp. 117 seq:

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front with an overhanging storey was removed, and a new flat brick front with projecting windows on the ground floor was set up in its stead. Despite other repairs, of later date, the ancient timber of the side-walls, the timber beams of the roof, and an open fireplace with ingle-nook and chimney-corner seats were suffered to survive.¹

So long as the houses were tenanted, these features, which may date from the sixteenth century, were largely concealed by modern plaster, whitewash, and wall paper. Their presence was verified by experimental scraping after the residents had left the premises during the past few weeks. A correspondent of the *Birmingham Daily Post* first described those relics of the original building in his newspaper on May 9, 1903. He seemed somewhat to overestimate their value. But a thorough survey led the Trustees to the conclusion that the old work inside these cottages

¹ Mrs. Alice Meynell, who joined in the outcry against the Trustees, described these cottages in a letter to the *Academy* of March 7, as "two gabled and timbered houses of which the age is disputed, but the proportions and appropriateness are obviously right." Another like misrepresentation, even more typical of the public criticism which has been recently in circulation, figured in the *Sunday Sun* of April 26, where the writer declared these "two quaint cottages" to be "of ancient though rich Elizabethan design." In view of Mrs. Meynell's misconception of the aspect of the buildings, it is no matter for surprise that she should add:—"Their place is to be taken by a new Free Library, to be built by the munificence of Mr. Carnegie." No such destination of this property was at any time contemplated.

MR. CARNEGIE'S COTTAGES

rendered their preservation desirable. The expert advice of Mr. J. A. Cossins, the architect, who represents at Birmingham the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, showed that it would be easy to renew the ancient shape of the interior. The harmless nineteenth-century brick façade has neither architectural nor archæological value, but I believe that the Trustees propose to leave it standing for the present.

Whatever the extent of the renovation, the two cottages will henceforth be employed solely for the purposes of the Birthplace Trust. Neither fire nor artificial light will be permitted in them. The Custodian's house, which stands in their western vicinity, will be vacated and will remain untenanted, while the garden formed of the unoccupied land, whence the two adjacent hovels have been removed, will now bound the cottages on their eastern side. Thus the object of isolating the Birthplace, which the purchase of the cottages was intended by Mr. Carnegie to secure, will be fully attained. At the same time, the Trust and the Public will greatly benefit by the extra room-space which the conservation of the two cottages places at the disposal of the Trustees. The Trust has long been in want of convenient board-room, secretarial offices and muniment room, and to almost all those purposes the new property can readily be adapted.

V

The Corporation and the Free Library

I NOW turn to the action of the Corporation in the matter of the Free Library. Here, too, I find that the censorious clamour rests on everything except accurate knowledge. The need or desire of a Public Library in Stratford has been impugned. We are told that there are enough libraries there already, and that, finally, if a library is to be "imposed" on the town at all, it is the height of impropriety to set it up in Henley Street.

Undoubtedly there are in the town two good Shakespearean collections of books, each devoted to a particular department of the subject; one of these special collections, dealing with the biography of the poet, is in the Birthplace Museum; the other, dealing with his works, is in the Shakespeare Memorial Library. But the existence of these collections—admirable as they are in their own way—has little bearing on the present question. These Shakespearean collections have nothing in common with a library destined to

THE FREE LIBRARY

serve the general purposes of the Stratford public. At present the numerous readers and students among the rank and file of the Stratford townfolk are without free access to any general literature apart from Shakespeare—to works of reference, to standard treatises of science or art, to newspapers and periodicals. The Corporation's critics are in error in imagining that the townfolk cherish doubts as to the advantages that they or their numerous summer-visitors are likely to derive from a Free Library. The Public Library system may be open to abuse in practice, but no sensible native of Stratford has been found to deny that its principle is sound and one capable of useful application to his own town.

Mr. Carnegie's gift did not originate the Library movement there. A dozen years ago endeavours to establish a Free Public Library were initiated, and, although those endeavours progressed slowly, they never wholly ceased. Last year, before Mr. Carnegie's gift was in question, it was understood at Stratford that Miss Corelli herself, who now attacks both Trustees and Corporation on the ground that the town "has never sought a Free Library at all," was generously considering a proposal to provide a site for a Free Library or Reading Room, in furtherance of the townfolk's wishes. The still vacant plot of land in Henley Street which the fire of 1896 had cleared, was widely discussed as a suitable

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

location. Although it was only six doors off the Birthplace, its appropriation to the purposes of a Free Library or Reading Room was, before this controversy arose, believed in Stratford to have the approval of Miss Corelli herself.¹ This scheme of devoting to the public purpose of a Library the only vacant site in Henley Street is now in course of fulfilment by the joint action of Mr. Carnegie and the Corporation.

¹ Mr. Fred Winter, an active citizen of Stratford and a zealous supporter of the Free Library movement, wrote a letter, which was published in the *Stratford-on-Avon Herald* on June 12, to the effect that "before any mention was made of the proposed gift of a Free Library to Stratford-on-Avon by Mr. Carnegie," he was asked to obtain for Miss Corelli a price for this piece of land (then belonging to Mr. John Wright) in Henley Street, "for the purpose of a Free Library," and that the negotiation for the purchase fell through because Miss Corelli deemed the price asked by the owner to be "too high." I am informed by Miss Corelli's solicitors that Mr. Winter's statements are untrue, and that she has issued writs for libel against him and the proprietor of the *Stratford-on-Avon Herald*. Both gentlemen are defending the action.

VI

The Choice of a Site

IRRESPONSIBLE gossip reiterated throughout the controversy that Mr. Carnegie, with a view to associating his name with Shakespeare's, proposed to erect in proximity to Shakespeare's Birthplace an ostentatious building of palatial splendour. Mr. Carnegie has, indeed, been charged with a fixed resolution to "overshadow, dwarf and hide" Shakespeare's Birthplace by erecting in its near neighbourhood an "assertive" edifice, which should commemorate his own name. In an article entitled "The Body Snatchers," in the April number of the monthly review called *King and Country*, Miss Corelli wrote that Mr. Carnegie's Library was likely to "proudly overshadow Shakespeare's Birthplace as a sign-manual of what the over-officiousness of moneyed men can do to dwarf the abode of genius." "There is only one Henley Street," wrote Lady Colin Campbell to the *Birmingham Daily Post* in "an admirable letter," according to Miss Corelli, which "puts the case in a nutshell,"—"There is only one

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

Henley Street and there is not room in Henley Street for both Shakespeare and Carnegie. Which is to wipe out the other ?”¹ With a moderation, be it said, that is quite praiseworthy in view of the strained language that seems inevitable in Miss Corelli’s adherents, the editor of *The Sphere* lent his support to the like theory on May 16: “Something ‘magnificent,’ suggestive of this generosity of an American millionaire, will arise by the side of Shakespeare’s House to the entire dwarfing of the older structure.”

The whole suggestion is a travesty of the truth.²

¹ Miss Corelli’s “The Body Snatchers” in the April–June number of *King and Country*, p. 401. To the same category should be assigned a singular telegram “from 200 Shakespearean students,” of which the Mayor announced the receipt at the close of the meeting of the Council on May 12. These “students” “viewed,” they informed the Mayor, “with the utmost pain and indignation the proposals to erect a Public Free Library in Henley Street, so long sacred to the immortal memory of Shakespeare only. They warmly protested against it, and were resolved if such an act be perpetrated, to hand down to execration the names of those who perpetrated and consented to the same, united with the name of Francis Gastrell, the destroyer of the Shakespeare mulberry tree.” These protesters showed moderation in describing Francis Gastrell, who also demolished Shakespeare’s house, New Place, as merely “the destroyer of the Shakespeare mulberry tree.”

² A writer, seeking to explain Miss Corelli’s position, in the *Sunday Sun* of April 26 is responsible for the following: “As I understand it, the local authorities are willing that Mr. Carnegie should present their township with a new and up-to-date palace of literature, with all the latest architectural nicknacks and the finest things in Pittsburg fixings; *the said palace to be*

THE LIBRARY SITE

The only part that Mr. Carnegie has played in the business has been to promise payment for the library building, whatever the form the Corporation allotted to it, and on whatever site they placed it. He has expressed the wish that his name should not be bestowed on the building and that it should be merely called "The Stratford Free Public Library."

reared in close proximity to Shakespeare's Birthplace—adjoining the garden thereof, on a site now held by two quaint cottages of ancient though rich Elizabethan design." The passage needs no comment, but I italicize one clause which unconcernedly assigns a wrong site to the Library, and misconceives the object with which Mr. Carnegie purchased the cottages. Another writer in *The New Liberal Review* for June goes a step further in a like tirade which, by its references to Mr. Carnegie, constitutes a curious specimen of taste. The writer asserts: "In this one instance [of his gift of a library to Stratford-on-Avon] Mr. Carnegie has broken his rule of not providing the site. Why does he do so in this instance and in no other, save for the notion which is being held on to by the local authorities with truly pig-headed obstinacy, in the face of the protest of every member of the archæological society and of every one else with anything like a grain of intelligence, that it would be a neat and good thing to have Carnegie in the same street with Shakespeare. No doubt Mr. Carnegie loves Stratford-on-Avon. So do I—and there are others. But it is overdoing affection if one indulges in the rib-breaking embrace of the bear. Mr. Carnegie has purchased the site of the cottages adjoining the birthplace of Shakespeare. Let him see to it that better use is made of the site than the immodest projection of his own name with that of Shakespeare. Even if the old cottages ought to be pulled down (rather a sudden discovery), there is no argument in this for the erection of a Norman Shaw faked Tudor structure." It will be seen that this writer is as misinformed as most of his fellows in regard to the actual site of the library.

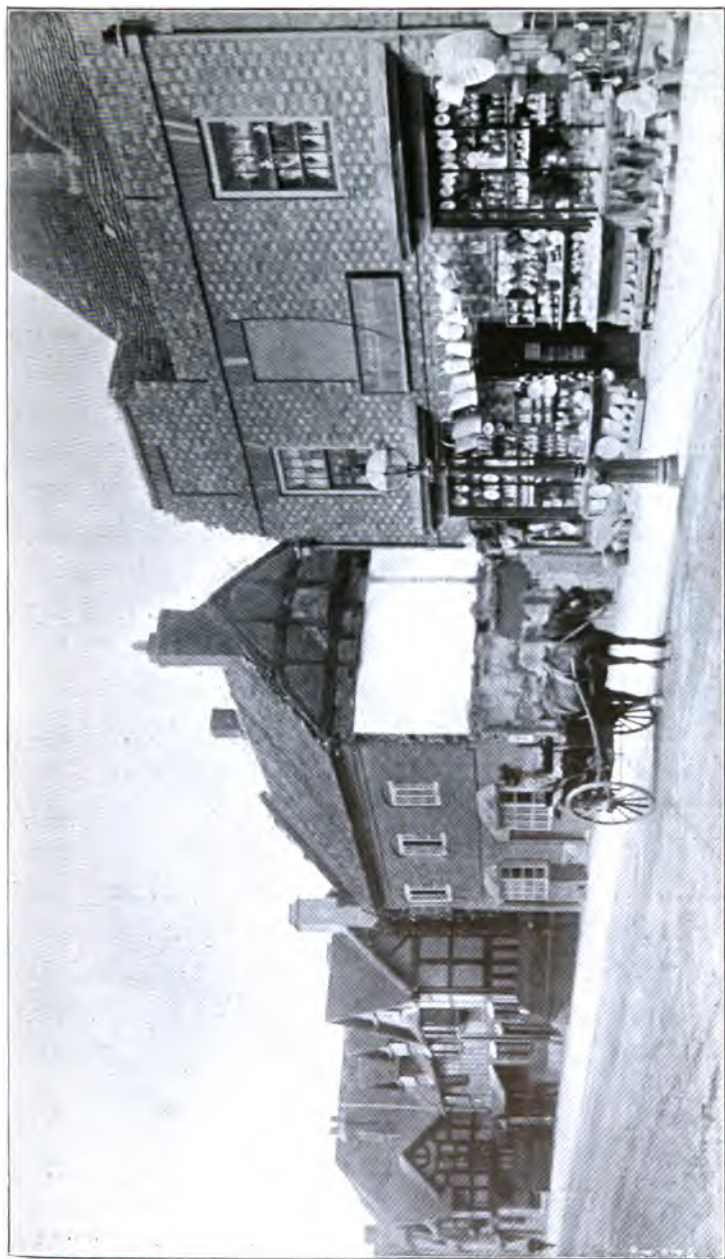
THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

The circumstances of the case excluded from the Corporation's consideration an elaborate architectural design. The cost of maintaining the new Library was to fall on the rates, and the rateable value of a little town like Stratford was quite small. Consequently the authorities were debarred by their legal obligations from ever contemplating the erection of any but a building of modest dimensions which would alone be appropriate to the size and rateable capacity of the place.¹

The selection of the Henley Street site was induced by like imperative practical considerations, and, despite all the bold assertions to the contrary, no rational archæological interests are jeopardized thereby.

The Corporation already owned, in Henley Street, premises which, though they were long occupied as a china-shop; could be turned to municipal uses with the smallest possible burden to the ratepayers. This arrangement was at once sanctioned by the Local Government Board. On one side, these premises were bounded by the row of cottages which have been transferred by Mr. Carnegie to the Birthplace Trustees. On the other side stood the vacant land of which the

¹ The original design prepared by the local architect, Mr. Holtom, and published in the *Stratford-on-Avon Herald* on August 15, 1902, is the best refutation of the baseless suggestions of "millionaire magnificence." It has been adapted by Mr. Edgar Flower in the sketch reproduced on page 55, and is in its main aspects to be carried out.



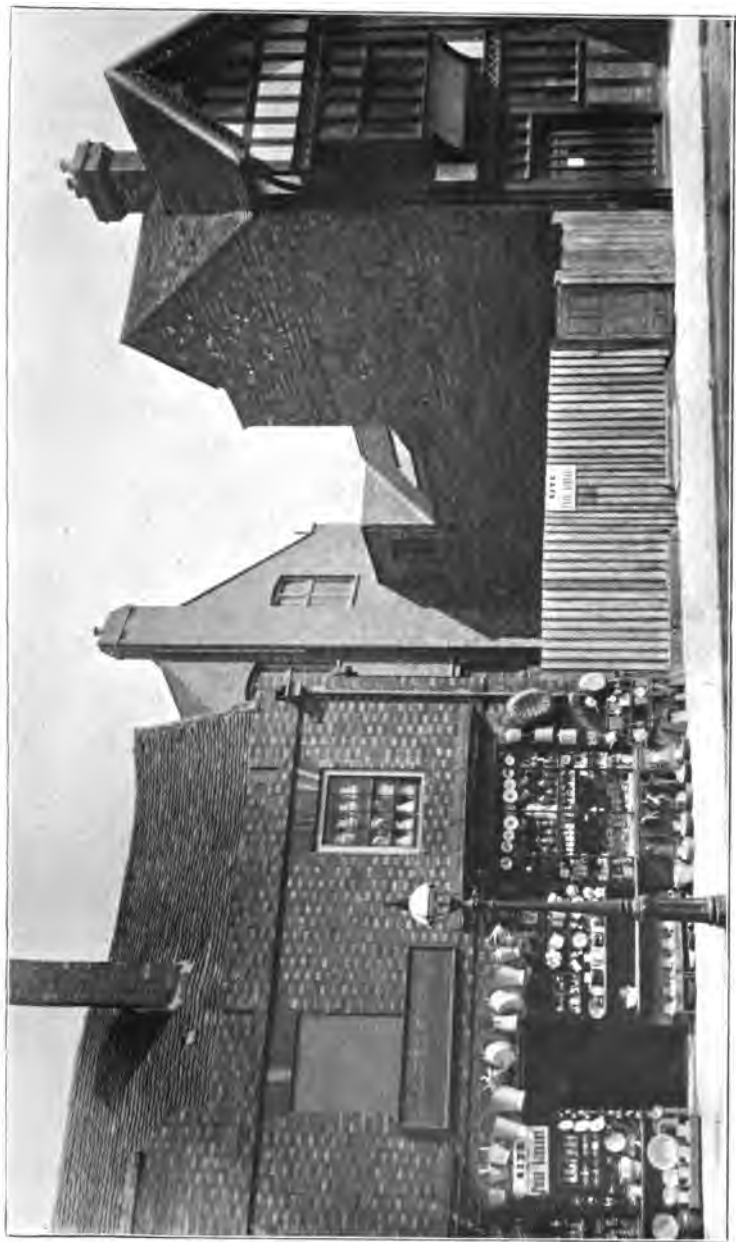
THE CORPORATION CHINA-SHOP, THE TWO COTTAGES, AND THE BIRTHPLACE
[After the demolition of the two modern cottages adjoining the china-shop]

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

appropriation to the purpose of a Library was already in contemplation.

To unite that still vacant plot with the adjacent site of the Corporation's premises was eminently desirable on grounds alike economical and archæological. Firstly, the union secured for the projected Library a modest area of convenient extent. Secondly, it has to be borne in mind that the vacant plot of land adjoined on its further limit the Municipal Technical School, and that, by setting up the Library in proximity to the School, the Corporation would be able to practise the wise economy of placing both institutions under a single administration. Thirdly (and this point is not the least important of the three), it was well known that, were the vacant land not soon secured for public purposes, it was destined for a new shop of unattractive modern type. Mr. Edgar Flower, whose liberality and zeal for the welfare of Stratford are as conspicuous as his artistic skill and knowledge, rendered the town the best of services, from every point of view, by purchasing the vacant land at the price asked by its owner and by handing it over to the Corporation to form part of the site of the new Library.

Of all the censure passed on the Corporation or Trustees in the course of the controversy, probably the least justifiable is the adverse criticism levelled at the Corporation on account of the



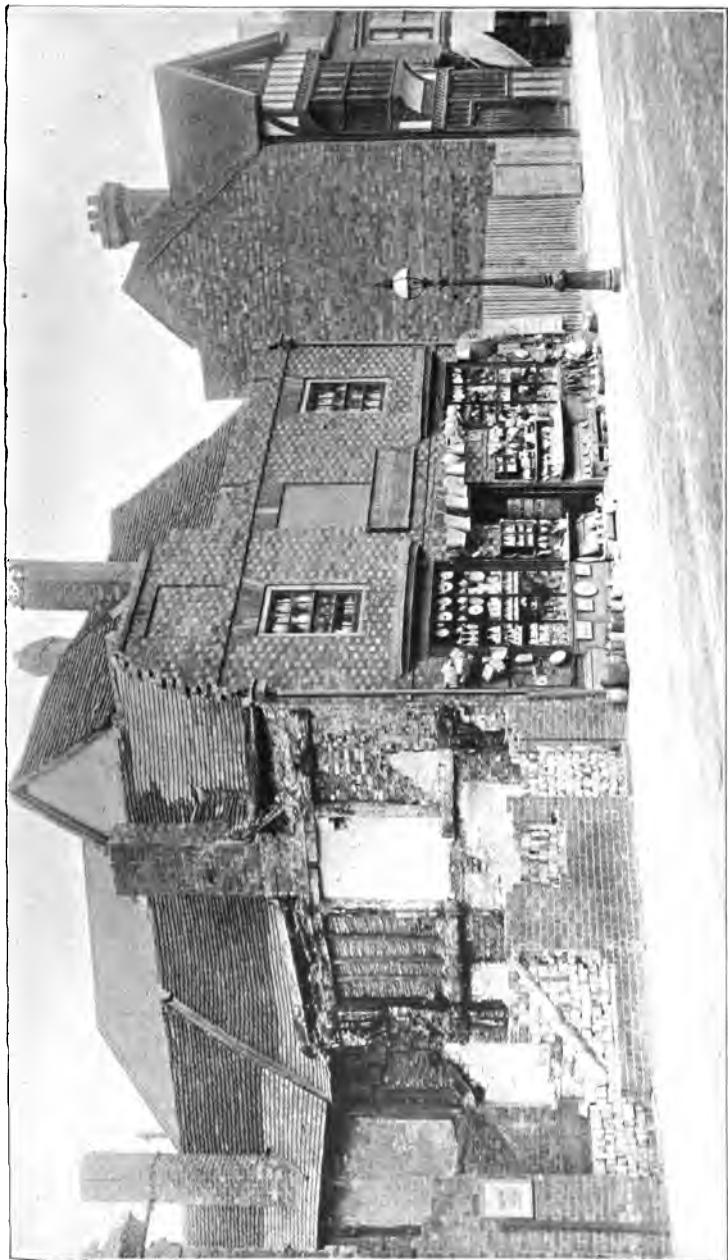
THE SITE OF THE PROPOSED FREE LIBRARY

[The Corporation china-shop with the adjacent vacant land and entrance to the Municipal Technical School]

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

policy that it adopted in regard to its Henley Street premises (now used as a china-shop). All manner of erroneous information has been put into circulation on the subject. The present condition and the historical associations of the building have been incessantly misrepresented. It has been christened quite erroneously "the house of Shakespeare's cousin," and that misnomer has even defaced a resolution passed by the British Archæological Association. The National Trust for Places of Historic and Natural Beauty offered early in May to purchase the building of the Corporation, in order to preserve it intact, and "to make of it a special feature of Stratford-on-Avon." In spite of the obvious signs of modern reparation which it presented, the Secretary of the National Trust described the shop as "*an almost unique dwelling-house of the Shakespearean period, and well worth maintaining in its unmodernized condition.*"

The circumstance that the Corporation had for several months been patiently taking the best advice, with a view to preserving in the building whatever was of ancient value, was as completely ignored by the National Trust when offering to buy the building, which was not for sale, as by other antiquarian societies, which at the same time petitioned the Corporation to delay all action on every manner of irrelevant ground. It was stated over and over again that the



THE CORPORATION CHINA-SHOP

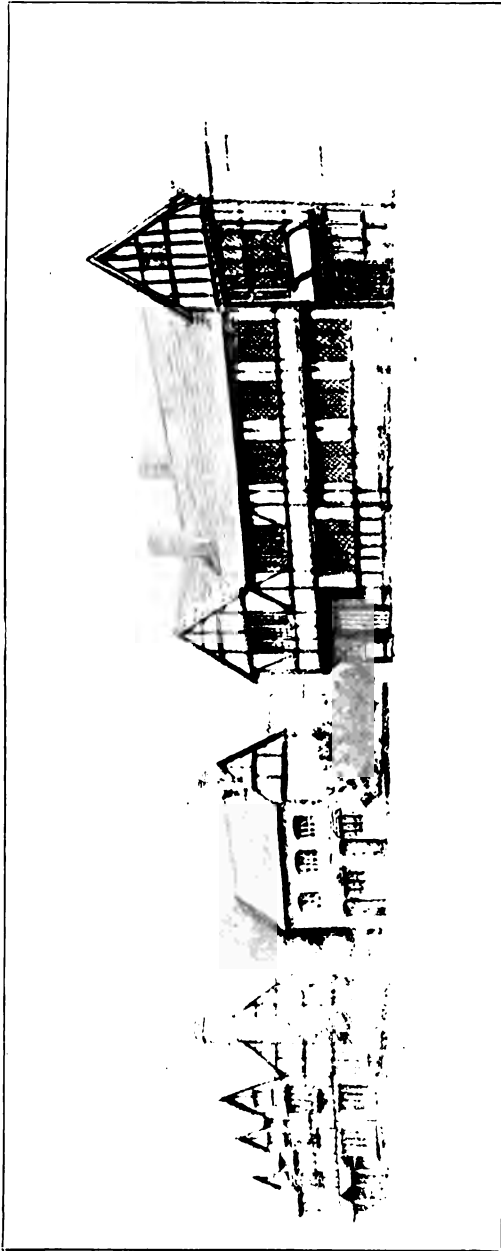
[Showing the eastern side-wall with a few surviving ancient timbers which were revealed by the demolition of Mr. Carnegie's adjacent cottages]

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

Corporation had obstinately resolved to destroy the china-shop root and branch, after their adoption of a report to the exactly opposite effect.¹

¹ On May 17, five days after the Town Council had publicly adopted the report of the Library Committee recommending the preservation of all sound portions of the house, and the restoration of the rest, Miss Corelli remarked to the O.P. Club: "We ask for this house; we who love Shakespeare want it cared for and kept intact on behalf of the nation, and this is what we are denied by the Executive Committee of the very Trustees who profess to guard what they are deliberately prepared to destroy." The confusion here is very great. The Executive Committee of the Birthplace Trustees had nothing to do with the fate of the Corporation's china-shop. The Library Committee of the Corporation which recommended the Corporation to keep the shop standing, and the Corporation which adopted that recommendation, are compelled by statute law to "guard" the ratepayers' interests. They are in no position to "profess to guard" anything else.

This report is printed in full in Appendix II.



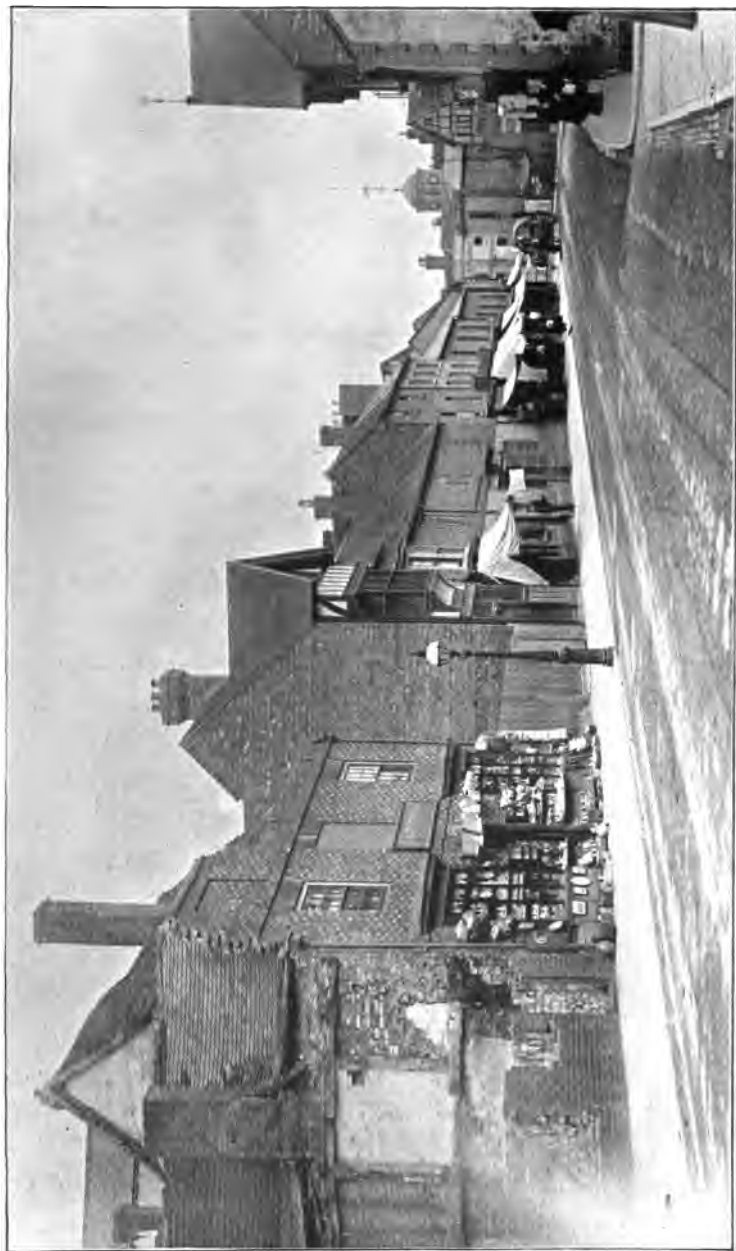
DESIGN FOR THE STRATFORD FREE PUBLIC LIBRARY

[From a sketch by Mr. Edgar Flower. To the right the Library, partly formed of the renovated china-shop, adjoins the Technical School. To the left is the Birthplace, with Mr. Carnegie's cottages isolated in the adjacent garden]

VII

The History of the China-Shop

THE authentic history of the premises is extant in the Corporation archives. At the time of Shakespeare's birth they were leased to one Gilbert Bradley, who was soon succeeded by one William Wilson. The Thomas Greene, to whom the lease passed in 1609, was there described as a yeoman of the neighbouring village of Bishopston. He is, on no showing, identifiable with the better known Thomas Greene, who was the first Town Clerk of Stratford, and is often called, on purely conjectural grounds, Shakespeare's cousin; in any case the relationship must have been very distant. Miss Corelli and her friends never tire of writing and speaking of the china-shop as "the house of Shakespeare's cousin," in spite of clear evidence to the contrary. "We are pleading," she told the O.P. Club on May 17, "for the quaint little half-timbered (*sic*) dwelling of one Thomas Greene, once Town Clerk of Stratford, and cousin to Shakespeare himself." The Town



HENLEY STREET, LOOKING EAST

[To the left, site of the demolished cottages and the china-shop, the Technical School in the centre, and a block of very recent buildings on the opposite side of the roadway at the right]

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

Clerk lived, not in Henley Street, but in the very differently situated thoroughfare of Old Town, sometimes called in the records "Old Stratford." In his official capacity, as his extant autograph notes attest, he negotiated the leasing-out of the Henley Street shop to his namesake "of Bishop-ton,"¹ and was always careful in his entries in the Corporation minute books to distinguish between himself and the resident in Henley Street, who bore his own appellation, whenever it was needful to mention either.

By 1781 the house had fallen into ruinous condition, and shortly afterwards a new brick front replaced the old timber façade, which was entirely demolished. But time's ravages were not stayed, and in 1831 the practical re-building of the whole edifice was urgently recommended.

That suggestion was imperfectly acted upon, and by 1855 the premises became uninhabitable. For twenty months they were unoccupied; they were then let to the father of the present occupiers

¹ The Henley Street Thomas Greene was sworn a burgess of Stratford on September 1, 1615, and the entry to that effect in the minutes of the Town Council or "Common hall" is in the handwriting of the Town Clerk, Thomas Greene, who was careful to interlineate the distinguishing words "of Henley Street" after his namesake's appellation. Again, in the minutes of the Council meeting held on January 30, 1617-8, a statement respecting the payment by Thomas Greene of £10 for a new lease of his house in Henley Street is followed by a reference to "the house that Mr. Thomas Greene dwelled in in Old Stratford."

THE CHINA-SHOP

on condition that he put them in "tenantable repair." This was done as crudely and as cheaply as possible; but it is difficult to understand how, in presence of the fact that the house had parted with its timber front at the close of the eighteenth century, and had undergone frequent alterations since, the Secretary of the National Trust can justify his description of it seven weeks ago as "an almost unique dwelling-house of the Shakespearean period in unmodernized condition." Archæological enthusiasm here seems to have signally overstepped the bounds of accuracy.

The house is now in a very bad state. The greater part of the parapet of the modern brick front has fallen down. In the ordinary course of events the Corporation would be legally obliged to provide for the house's entire reconstruction.

The assignment of the premises to a public object renders possible renovation which shall be in fuller harmony with archæological sentiment of the practicable kind. Mr. Cossins, the architect, who was at first of opinion that the building was too dilapidated to make its preservation feasible, subsequently advised the Corporation that the premises might after thorough reparation be adapted to the purposes of a library without detriment to any structural work of really ancient origin that could be safely retained.

The Corporation accepted Mr. Cossins' final advice without any demur. At the same time it was

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

decided that the new modest building to be erected as part of the library on the adjacent vacant land should strictly conform in style and elevation with the renovated premises. Mr. Cossins' advice has now received the full approval of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings. At the invitation of the Library Committee of the Corporation, Mr. Thackeray Turner, the Secretary of the Society, in company with another member, inspected the china-shop premises on May 29. They have since reported that "the premises are well worthy of preservation from their interest and age," and that "undoubtedly such buildings would be more likely to be permanently preserved if regularly used and occupied, which seems to have been only partially the case for some years." The report calls attention to the fact that "the modern brick front . . . is not structurally in a sound condition, and it cannot be, because the houses being of timber, and the front of brick, there is no satisfactory bond between them." It is recommended that the whole of the ancient work which remains inside the house should be retained unaltered, but that a new timber front should be constructed. Useful suggestions follow as to the materials that it would be desirable to employ and the general principles of simplicity that should be respected.¹ The

¹ For the full report see Appendix III.

THE CHINA-SHOP

Society's report is in full accord with all that the Stratford authorities have done or sought to do.

In view of this report of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, it is interesting to recall the action taken by the British Archæological Association. On May 20 the Association passed a resolution in which the china-shop was once more called, without qualification, "the house of Shakespeare's cousin"; and it was peremptorily declared, in direct conflict with the report of the Society for Protecting Ancient Buildings, that "the removal of the brick front ought not to be carried out." On June 24 Mr. George Patrick, A.R.I.B.A., the honorary secretary of the Archæological Association, addressed to his Chairman and Council an official report, made on their instructions, in regard to the whole question. Again the china-shop was "stated to have been the house of Shakespeare's cousin," and the further intelligence was offered that "at a later date it was believed to have been occupied by Mr. Collins, the lawyer who drew up Shakespeare's will." The second statement finds no more support than the first in the complete set of legal papers affecting the house which are preserved in the Corporation archives. Nevertheless, Mr. Patrick proceeded to give expression to his fear that "the proposed alterations to the interior of the house" would destroy "its

THE ALLEGED VANDALISM

identity as the house occupied by a relative of Shakespeare.”¹

¹ The whole of Mr. Patrick's report is curiously inconclusive. He describes the side of the house that is now exposed by the demolitions of the adjoining cottages as “in a very dilapidated condition, requiring very careful reparation, and that without further delay. Some of the timbers are quite decayed, and others show the action of fire at some period. This house appears to have had, originally, an overhanging front, as the recent demolition alluded to has exposed the angle storey post and curved bracket of massive timber. Careful reparation of this side with old sound timber, of which, I am informed, there is plenty available from other demolished houses in the town, and the filling in of the inter-spaces with good ‘rough-cast,’ is what I would venture to recommend for its preservation, together with careful pointing of the exposed brickwork.” Mr. Patrick repeats the previously expressed view of the Association that “it would be a mistake to remove the red brick front or to carry out the proposed alterations (of Mr. Cossins), as the house does not appear to me to be suitable to the purposes of a library. . . . Carefully repaired, as above suggested, the house will last for many years, and will be available for other public purposes.” Here Mr. Patrick appears to labour under the delusion that the Corporation enjoys immunity from the ordinary legal obligation of keeping its corporate property in thorough and permanent repair, and that it is at liberty to devote at will property in a dilapidated or semi-repaired state to undefined public purposes which serve no known public requirements. The main effect of the Corporation's retention of the damaged façade, which has neither historic nor archaeological interest, would be, apart from questions affecting the Corporation's obligations in regard to the due maintenance of its property, to bolster up for the few years longer that the front might still survive the spurious claim to real antiquity which has been urged in its behalf. It is right to add that Mr. Patrick, in conclusion, admits “the difficulty of the position in which the Corporation of Stratford-on-Avon, the Birthplace Trustees and the Library Committee are placed.”

THE CHINA-SHOP

Moreover, in a letter addressed to the *Birmingham Gazette* on July 4 Mr. Patrick said: "As to the communications that have passed between the local authorities, Mr. A. Flower and myself, on behalf of my Council, I can only say we have been treated with the greatest courtesy, and I trust our views have been expressed with like consideration."

VIII

Conclusion

THUS it will be recognized that, so far from destroying "historic Henley Street," the Trustees and the Corporation, through the generous aid of Mr. Carnegie, are doing precisely the opposite. They are permanently preserving all structural work in houses under their control there, which has proved on accurate examination to possess any kind of archæological interest. The process of modernizing Henley Street has in past years progressed very far, and of late, but for Mr. Carnegie's interposition, threatened a conspicuous advance. That process has now, at an interesting point in the thoroughfare, been arrested, and some careful and scholarly restoration has been made practicable.

Of the aspersions that have been cast, in the present controversy, on members of the Flower family, which through three generations has devoted itself to the true interests of Stratford and its associations, it need only be said that they injure the repute of no one except that of

CONCLUSION

their author. Sane public criticism of the work of the Trustees and of the Corporation is, in view of the national interest attaching to their property, to be welcomed. Advice tendered by responsible persons has never, I believe, failed to receive most respectful attention. Every reasonable facility for inspecting what is done, or is proposed to be done, at Stratford is invariably afforded visitors by those in authority. Differences on æsthetic questions are at times inevitable, and admit of temperate discussion. Loud-mouthed censure, based on imperfect or erroneous information, is always to be deprecated and never deserves anything but reprobation.

APPENDIX I

The Birthplace Trustees.

THE Birthplace Trust was created on January 1, 1848, for the purpose of preserving, on behalf of the public, the house at Stratford-on-Avon known as Shakespeare's Birthplace, with the adjoining building, which had been in the occupation of Shakespeare's father. Other property of Shakespearean interest was subsequently conveyed to, or acquired by, the Trustees in accordance with the terms of the Trust. In order that "this national Trust" should be established on a more permanent and efficient basis—"with due and proper provisions for carrying the same into effect"—an Act of Parliament was passed in 1891 "to incorporate the Trustees and Guardians of Shakespeare's Birthplace, and to vest in them certain lands and other property in Stratford-upon-Avon, including the property known as Shakespeare's Birthplace; and to provide for the maintenance in connexion therewith of a Library and Museum; and for other purposes." It is this Act of 1891 which now governs the proceedings of the Birthplace Trustees.

In accordance with the provisions of the Act,

APPENDIX

the following persons now form the duly constituted body of Trustees—

EX-OFFICIO TRUSTEES

The Lord Lieutenant of the County : The LORD LEIGH.
The High Steward of the Borough :

The Mayor of the Borough : GEORGE MARTIN BIRD, Esq.*

The Aldermen of the Borough : W. G. COLBOURNE,*
R. LATIMER GREENE,* R. HAWKES, A. E. PARK,
W. PEARCE, J. SMALLWOOD.

The Justices of the Peace for the Borough : R. M. BIRD,
Esq.,* G. BOYDEN, Esq., JAS. COX, Esq.,* R. LATIMER
GREENE, Esq., R. HAWKES, Esq., W. HUTCHINGS,
Esq., J. J. NASON, Esq., M.B.,* J. SMALLWOOD, Esq.

The Town Clerk of the Borough : ROBERT LUNN, Esq.

The Vicar of the Parish : The Rev. G. ARBUTHNOT, M.A.*

The Head Master of the Grammar School : The Rev.
CORNWELL ROBERTSON, M.A.

LIFE TRUSTEES

ERNEST EDWARD BAKER, Esq., F.S.A.

The Rev. CANON EVANS, M.A.

EDGAR FLOWER, Esq., J.P.*

ARCHIBALD DENNIS FLOWER, Esq., C.C.*

The Lord RONALD SUTHERLAND GOWER, F.S.A.

FREDERICK HAINES, Esq., F.S.A.

Sir HENRY IRVING.

SIDNEY LEE, Esq., Litt.D.*

Sir THEODORE MARTIN, K.C.B., K.C.V.O.

The EARL OF WARWICK, D.L., J.P.

In Miss Corelli's article called "The Body Snatchers," which appeared in the April-June

* Members of the Executive Committee.

THE BIRTHPLACE TRUSTEES

number of *King and Country*, she printed with various comments the names of these Trustees. The Ex-officio members she described as "all excellent, well meaning and worthy men, but none of them even profess to be deeply skilled in matters literary or artistic. . . . Only three may presumably claim to have received a thorough literary education," viz., the Lord Lieutenant, the Vicar, and the Schoolmaster. Of the Life Trustees, she declared that all excepting two were inactive, but that these two, viz., "Edgar Flower, brewer ; and Archibald Dennis Flower, his son, likewise brewer . . . may be plainly said to 'manage' the whole thing."

On May 5, in a speech which was addressed to the Selborne Society at its annual meeting (held in London under the chairmanship of Lord Avebury, president of the Society), and was fully reported in *Nature Notes: The Selborne Society's Magazine* for June, Miss Corelli said, "The existing Act of Parliament with respect to the Birthplace was not sufficiently protective; it vested all business in the hands of certain persons acting as Trustees on behalf of the nation." In ignorance of the mode of co-optative election provided by the Act, which imposes no manner of pecuniary qualification, Miss Corelli proceeded to state: "Every person being the donor of £100 could be a Trustee."¹ After deploring

¹ The clause dealing with the election of Life Trustees (Ex-officio succeed in virtue of their office) runs thus:—"Whenever, by death, resignation or otherwise, any one or

APPENDIX

the devotion of any part of Henley Street to the purposes of a Library, and announcing her fear that Mr. Carnegie was unlikely to suggest any change of site, "as he had said in a letter to her that he had full faith in the local authorities," Miss Corelli remarked, "The only local authority he [i.e. Mr. Carnegie] knew or whom he had met or conversed with was Mr. Flower, the brewer. He [i.e. Mr. Carnegie] said in a most vague way that the Shakespeare Society at the Birthplace had thanked him for his gift." Mr. Carnegie, by a slip of the pen, evidently wrote "Shakespeare Society" for "Shakespeare Trustees." Nevertheless, Miss Corelli continued thus: "That just showed the muddle the poor man was in, for there was no Shakespeare Society at the Birthplace. Mr. Flower, the brewer, dominated all the rest. Was it right that such a possession should be governed by one or two local men, who were neither students nor lovers of Shakespeare, but merely interested in trade?"

On May 17 Miss Corelli addressed a crowded meeting of the O.P. Club in London on the subject

more of the Life Trustees by this Act appointed shall cease to act, then and in every such case the Trustees shall, at a meeting convened, with notice of the object, by a circular in writing, addressed to every Trustee by the Secretary (if any) of the Trustees, or if there shall be no Secretary, then by the Town Clerk of the Borough of Stratford-upon-Avon, not less than two nor more than three weeks before the day of such meeting, and at which meeting not less than five Trustees shall be present, proceed to appoint a Trustee or Trustees to fill the vacancy so created."

THE BIRTHPLACE TRUSTEES

of "the demolition of certain portions of Shakespeare's birth street." Of the Birthplace Trust she spoke as follows (I quote a shorthand writer's notes): "Ladies and Gentlemen,—We have heard of big Trusts: Trusts that spring up in a night like mushrooms to wither in the morning; Trusts that are spun like gossamer and are dispersed with the first adverse wind; Trusts like unsuspected quicksands absorbing men's lives and fortunes into oblivion; Trusts that may be, for all we know, as solid as the rocks. But the most curious Trust anybody ever heard of is surely the Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust, which by Act of Parliament in 1891 is stated to be on behalf of the nation, but which has now become entirely involved in a Brewery Company. I do not profess to explain how this quick change Trust has been effected, but that it is so can be affirmed beyond a doubt. Nothing can be suggested, resolved or carried out at Shakespeare's Birthplace without the authority of the principals of the Brewery. All the custodians, committees or libraries are under the same government absolutely. The nation is represented there, not in a form of consideration and respect for the poetic term, but for the prosaic beer barrel. The Chairman of the Executive Committee (Edgar Flower) is a brewer; his son, Archibald Flower, who is alone responsible for forcing Mr. Carnegie into this matter against all the appeals and protests of learned and literary Societies, is likewise a brewer. These are the principals of the Trust on behalf of the nation.

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There are other Trustees who are not brewers, but learned and distinguished men ; but these seldom, I may almost say never, attend the meetings. The Executive Committee nominate a few ornamental persons whose names are a guarantee of a description, but whose daily-life business makes their attendance well-nigh impossible. The rest are selected among purely local individuals."

These quotations more especially illustrate the habitual tone of the criticism to which two of the Birthplace Trustees, Mr. Edgar Flower and Mr. A. D. Flower, have been subjected throughout the controversy. The remarks are not in themselves worthy of notice. True lovers of Stratford-on-Avon, alike in this country and in America, are familiar with the benefits that the Flower family has continually conferred on the town through fully seventy years. The late Mr. Edward Fordham Flower, Mr. Edgar Flower's father, was one of four local residents whose purchase on their own responsibility in 1847 of Shakespeare's Birthplace enabled the building to be permanently preserved as a national trust. Regard for the welfare of Stratford and for the memory of Shakespeare has always governed the family's public and private life.

An anonymous writer in the *Birmingham Gazette* on June 30, writing over the signature "Fiat Lux," stated in reply to such portion of my statement as was published in that newspaper the day before: "Mr. Sidney Lee, among other diffuse matter, speaks of 'aspersions cast on the

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Flower family.' No one is aware that any aspersions have been cast on any particular 'family.'" The extracts that I print above will scarcely permit "Fiat Lux" to deny again that aspersions—and aspersions, indeed, of singular unseemliness—have been more than once cast upon the Flower family in this controversy.

I happily find myself in full accord with the further observation of "Fiat Lux" that "this is a matter in which all personalities should be sunk in consideration of a national feeling."

APPENDIX II

The Library Committee's Report adopted by the Town Council, on May 12, 1903

THE Committee, which consisted of the Mayor (Councillor Bird), Alderman Smallwood, Councillors Flower and Greenway, reported as follows—

“ The Committee has held many meetings since its appointment. Mr. E. G. Holtom was instructed to prepare plans, and Mr. Jethro A. Cossins (who represents the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings) was called in to assist, and particularly to advise as to the treatment of the old house used as a china shop.

“ At first Mr. Cossins reported that, owing to the very small remains of the old building, the dilapidated condition of the property, and the difficulty of adapting it, he advised its entire removal ; but since then he has twice very carefully examined the building and gone closely into the matter with Mr. Holtom, and is now of opinion that a part of the old timber framed structure may be preserved.

“ The precise form the elevation will assume will depend largely upon what is revealed by pulling down the modern brick front. It is feared that it will be found that all the framing has been destroyed, but the position and propor-

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tions of the old gable will be apparent, and possibly some further small parts may remain.

“Mr. Cossins fully approves of the revised design which Mr. Holtom has made.

“The building on the ground between the china shop and the Technical School will be in the same style as the old house, while the modern warehouse at the back will be replaced by a reading-room in character with the other buildings.

“Arrangements having been made for the accommodation elsewhere of Messrs. Birch as from March 25, the work might have been commenced on that date, but as the outside public had shown great interest in this matter, it was thought well to wait until after the Shakespeare Festival in order that visitors to the town might have a good opportunity of seeing the site before it was touched.

“Many persons, who did not know or remember the actual surroundings, had been led to believe that some beautiful old cottages were to be replaced by a huge red-brick modern structure.

“It is satisfactory to note that, after inspection, the general verdict has been favourable to the suggestions of the Committee, and it is particularly gratifying to know that Mr. Sidney Colvin, who wrote a severe letter of condemnation to the *Times*, and whose opinion is highly esteemed, has now inspected the site and entirely changed his views.

“There is now nothing to prevent the work being carried out.”

APPENDIX III

Report of Mr. Thackeray Turner, Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, and another Member of that Society, to the Committee of that Society

“ To the Committee of the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

“ We have to report that on Friday, May 29, we visited the buildings in Henley Street, Stratford-on-Avon, as to which there has been considerable controversy in the Press.

“ The building to which our attention was directed is one which is occupied as a china shop, on the same side of the street as the Birthplace of Shakespeare. It is for the most part (and originally was wholly) of half-timber and plaster work, without very decided architectural style, but most probably belonging to the sixteenth century. It appears to have consisted of two distinct houses, built at different times, but with no long interval between, and has suffered some alteration and addition in the course of centuries, the most important of which is a brick face, which completely replaced the street fronts of the two houses, and reduced them to one uniformly flat^m surface.

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On the west side, however, two modern cottages have lately been removed, and it can be seen that the front of the upper storey of the house on that side hung over the lower by a foot or two, the oak bracket and post supporting it still remaining in position. In the upper room some of the floor boards of the portion that overhung have been taken up, and it can be seen that at the eastern end the beams have been supplemented so as to carry out the floor to meet the wall and make it lineable with the adjoining house, which it was not originally.

“ On the other side of the china shop is a blank space a few yards wide (on which stood a modern house burnt down some years ago), and beyond it the new buildings of a Technical School, with an entrance from Henley Street.

“ It appears to us unfortunate that a new building so large and of such obtrusive architectural character should have been erected in an ancient part of Stratford, but it is there, and we understand that it is desirable that the proposed Public Library should adjoin it so as to be under one administrative staff. We also understand that it is proposed to utilize the old houses above described (known as the china shop) for the purpose of the Library, and to connect them by new work with the Technical School.

“ We consider that the old houses (even apart from the great probability of their being a part of the street as it was in Shakespeare's time) were well worthy of careful preservation from their

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intrinsic interest and age, and that undoubtedly such buildings would be more likely to be permanently preserved if regularly used and occupied, which seems to have been only partially the case for some years. It is certain, however, if the houses can no longer be retained for their original domestic use, that in adapting them to the purposes of a Library, the modern brick front must be so extensively altered that its present character would cease to exist. Moreover, it is not structurally in a sound condition, and it cannot be, because the houses being of timber, and the front of brick, there is no satisfactory bond between them.

“This brings us to the conclusion that if the buildings are to be used for a Library, a new front must be erected, and we consider that the whole of the ancient work which remains can be, and ought to be, retained unaltered, literally; and to do this it is desirable, if not essential, that the new front should be constructed of timber.

“In doing this we would urge that the purposes for which the building will have to be used should not be subordinated to any desire to ‘restore’ the old front, that the doors and windows should be of the sizes and in the positions most suitable for convenient access and lighting; that the aim should be primarily the upholding of the ancient work, and after that has been secured, the character of the new work should be dictated by the uses which it will have to fulfil, no attempt being made to follow the old work in design.

“We advise that English oak should be used

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as far as possible in bulk, unworked, that no oil or varnish should be applied to the oak, and that no mouldings, chamfers, or other ornamental features should be introduced. We suggest that the ground floor might be filled in between the structural posts, doors, windows, etc., with brick, and in order to avoid the ugly large modern bricks, old ones might be made use of.

“ In order to retain all the old work, the upper storey of one house must necessarily overhang the lower, and its base line cease to coincide with that of the adjoining one.

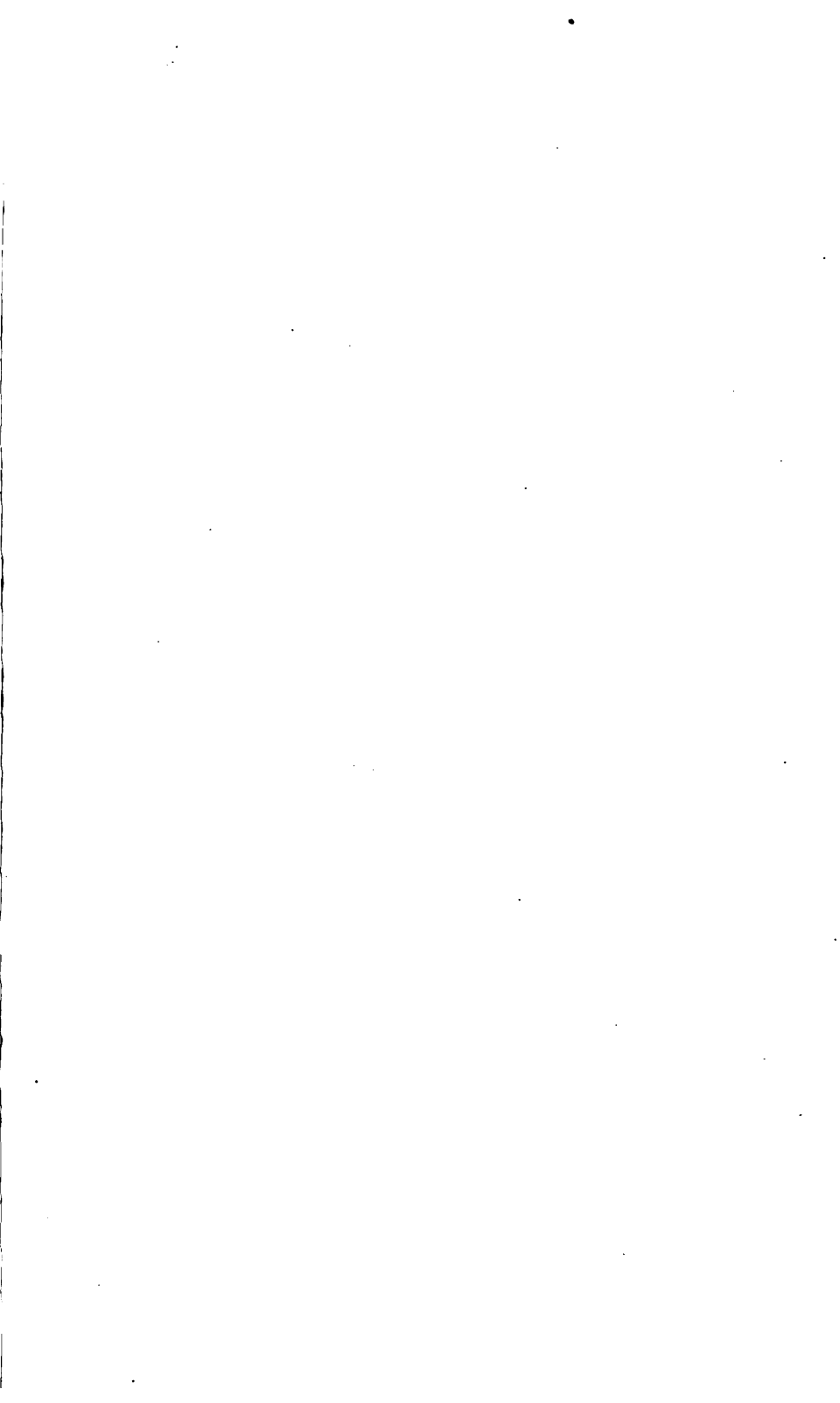
“ We would also suggest that plaster or rough-cast might suitably be employed, blue lias lime being used as the cementing material. Cement should be avoided, for its undesirable quality for such purposes is exemplified in Shakespeare's Birthplace.

(Signed) “ OLIVER BAKER.

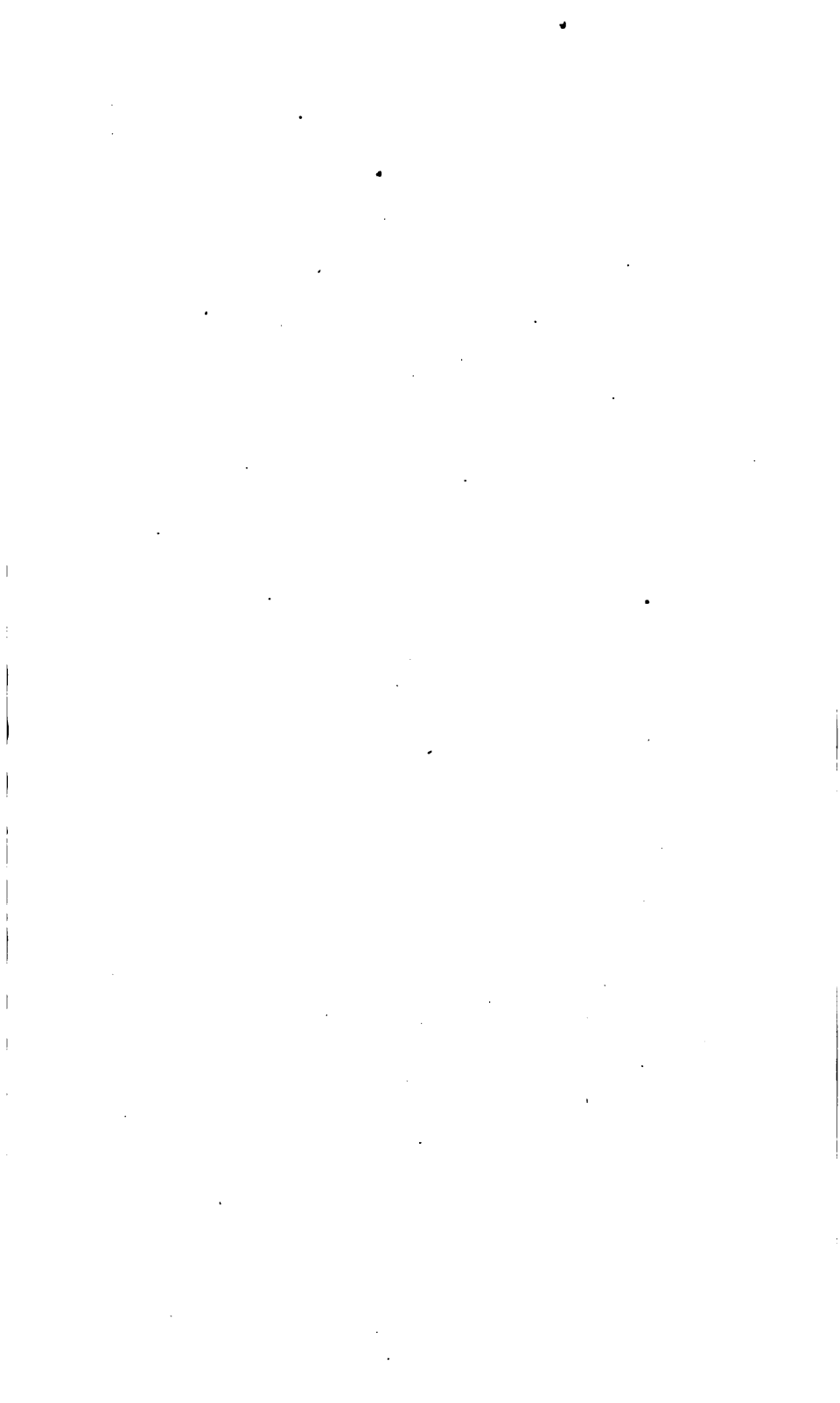
“ THACKERAY TURNER.

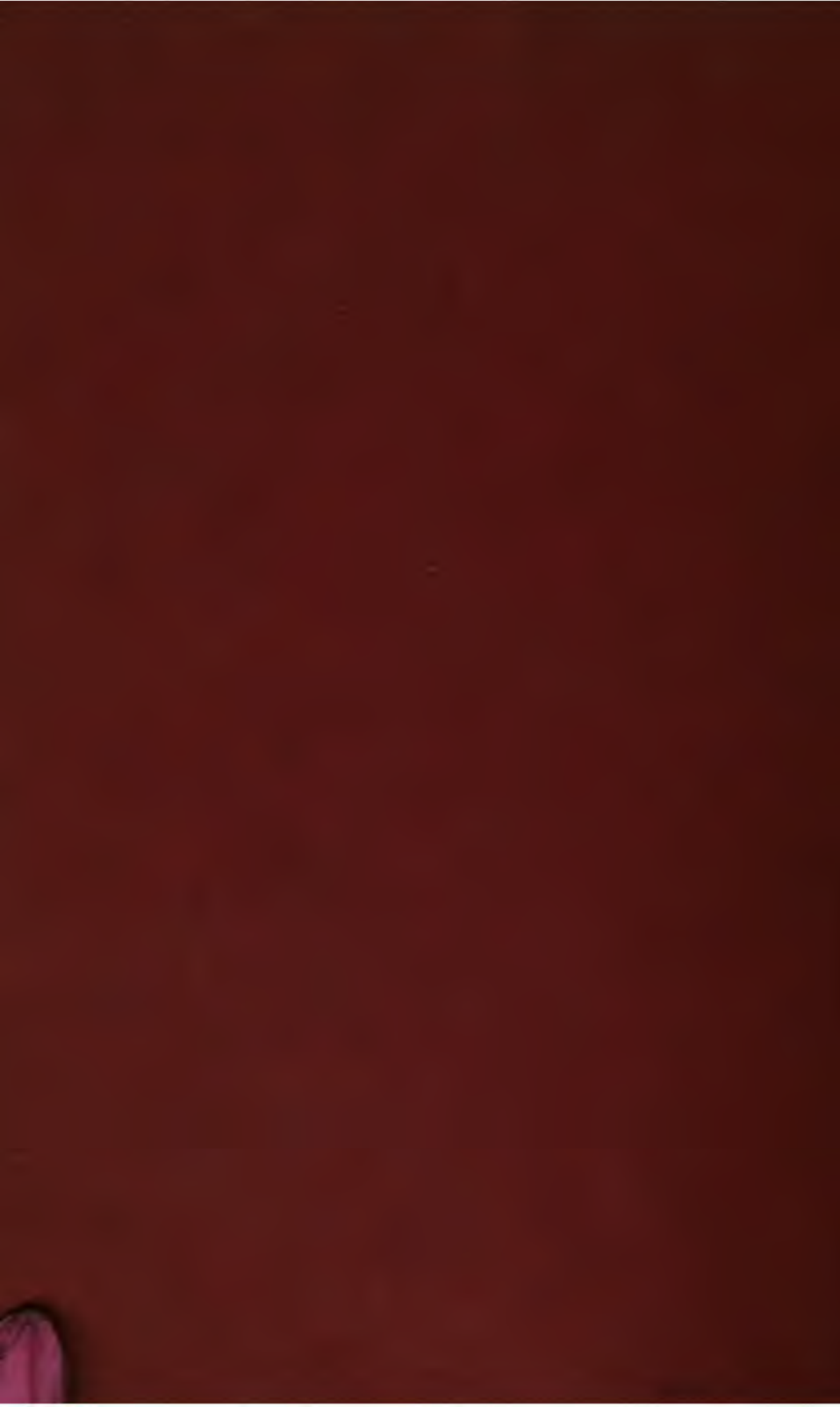
“ June 2, 1903.”

Butler & Tanner, The Selwood Printing Works, Frome, and London.

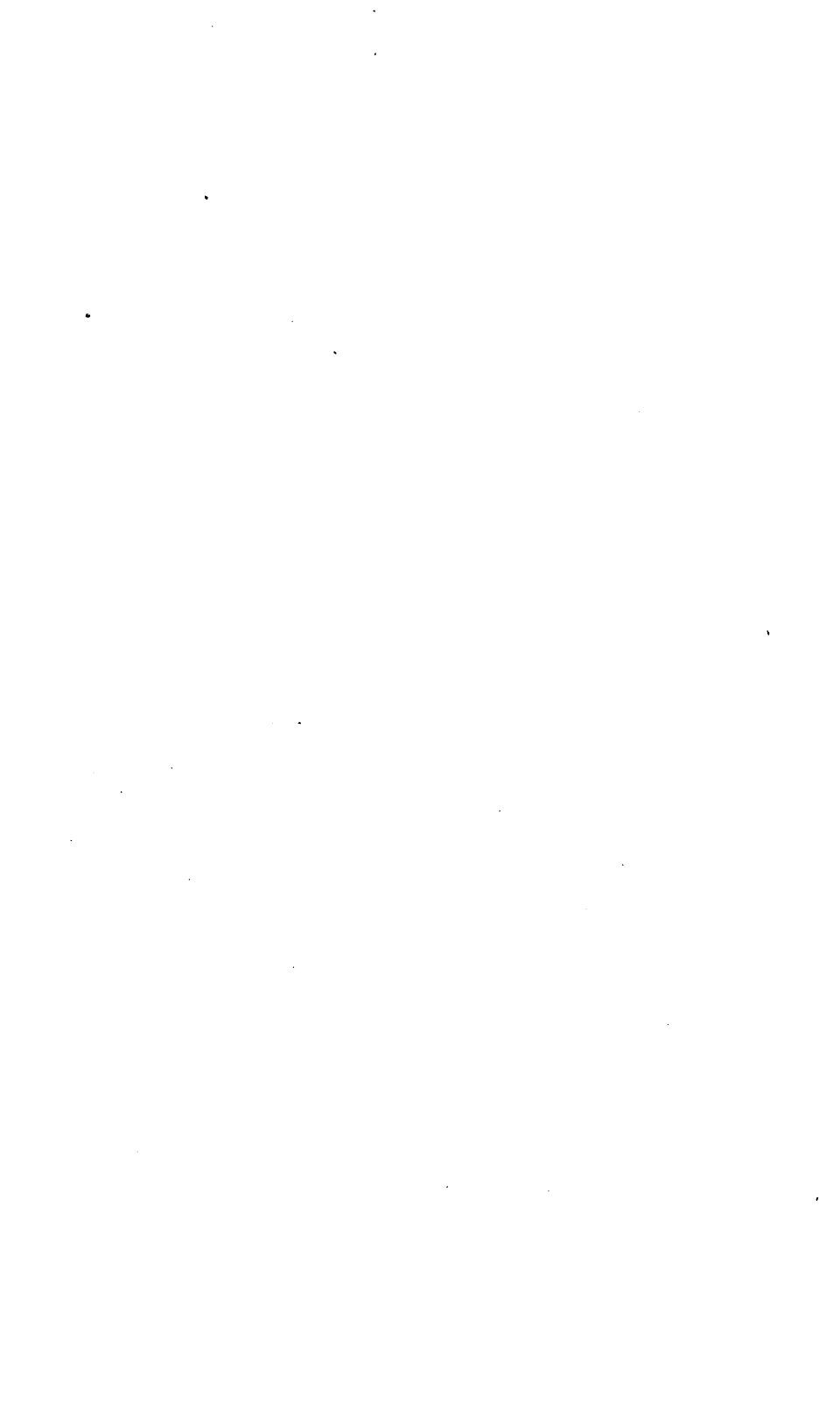












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